

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Faculty of Education

**Equity and efficiency in education textbook distribution policy
and practice : a case study**

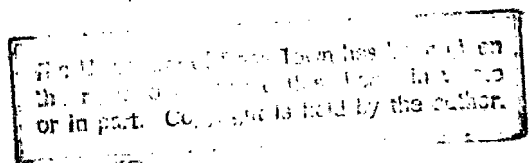
A research report presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION, PLANNING AND SOCIAL POLICY

By

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
BSU	Book Supply Unit
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
GNP	Gross National Product
IIEP	Institute of International Education Planning
NECC	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NED	National Education Dialogue
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
SFU	School Facilities Unit
SSU	School Supply Unit
TSRP	Training for Self-Reliance Project
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific Cultural Organisation

ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the Lesotho Education Ministry textbook distribution policy in order to

- understand the relationship between equity and efficiency in textbook distribution policy and practice
- investigate whether there is differentiation between urban and rural schools in textbook distribution policy and practice.

The study examined policy and practice at the level of the Ministry of education as implemented by the School Supply Unit, and at the level of the school.

The study took the form of a case study. First, official documents were analysed to develop an account of the textbook provision scheme, its origins, objectives, form and content. Secondly, interviews and a questionnaire provided participants views, attitudes, perspectives, expectations and experiences in relation to the scheme. Finally, an inventory of books and an analysis of order and inventory forms supplied evidence of what books were actually available in the schools. This was sometimes but not always, motivated by the desire to effect equity. On the whole, the outcomes of the textbook distribution scheme were found to be fairly equitable.

This can be explained with reference to

- the fact that up to a point improved efficiency also brought improved equity
- the *ad hoc* adaptations of policy in practice by officials and school staff and
- the efforts of the rural based school parent community to take full advantage of the scheme.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

The primary intention of this study is to do a comparative case study of policy and practice in relation to equity and efficiency in textbook distribution in selected urban and rural Lesotho primary schools.

- The study will attempt to understand the relationship between equity and efficiency in textbook distribution policy and practice.
- It will also investigate whether there is differentiation between urban and rural schools in textbook distribution policy and practice.

The study hopes to achieve the above by looking at policy and practice at the level of national policy, as devised by the ministry and implemented by the School Supply Unit, and at the level of the school.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Prior to 1983 parents bought books for their children and primary schools in Lesotho used different textbooks, depending on the titles selected by a particular school. These created problems for students in many ways. For instance, if a student changed schools, she/he might be required to purchase new textbooks because

books used at the new school were different from those used at the previous school and prices of textbooks prohibited some students from having their own textbooks and this promoted sharing of books among students. Again, due to the geo-physical and economic position of some places book distribution centres stocked only minimum numbers

of textbooks to avoid having excess inventory that might not be sold
(School Supply Unit information 17 November 1988 : not numbered).

As a result, children who went to schools in these areas did not have textbooks.

In order to alleviate the above problems, together with the problem of the decline in the quality of education, the Lesotho government decided to introduce common textbooks throughout the country's primary schools and to make such books available at a price that is affordable to all parents (Ministry of Education External Circular No. 37 of 1982).

In 1983, a Book Supply Unit (BSU) was formed under the Training for Self-Reliance Project (TSRP). The BSU supplied textbooks in three core subjects namely, Sesotho, English and Mathematics. In 1985 Science and social subjects were added to the scheme. Three years later, the scheme was extended to include provision of equipment for practical subjects and the BSU was renamed the School Supply Unit. When the TSRP was dissolved in 1993, the SSU was taken over by the Ministry of Education.

The current approach to textbook distribution in Lesotho has developed in two phases. The first phase occurred from 1982 to 1993 as described above and the second phase occurred from 1993 to the present under the School Supply Unit. Phase one was the initial policy that launched the scheme under the Training for Self Reliance Project.

(see also Cohen and Spillane 1992, Darling-Hammond 1986 and Finkelstein et. al 1997).

Malen and Knapp's observation that the relationship between policy and practice has not been studied enough was a challenge to me. I felt it would be interesting to find out the connection between policy and practice in textbook distribution in Lesotho because no such study has been undertaken on the topic in the country.

I have a personal interest in the topic stemming from my experience as a primary school student at a rural school from 1972-1978. At the time availability of students' textbooks was limited and there were no other sources of information in the locality. Besides, only children whose parents were employed or educated had textbooks. Reasons could be that these parents could afford to buy books for their children. With regard to the educated, it could be that they knew the value of textbooks because they had been in and benefited from the school system. I am interested in finding out whether present policies and practices have addressed the inequalities between urban and rural schools.

The interest to do the study was further enhanced by the literature which shows that urban schools are generally better equipped with textbooks than are rural schools. For example, an international survey done by the Institute of International Education Planning (IIEP) on some African countries confirms that there are inequalities in textbook distribution between urban and rural areas (Brunswick et. al. 1990, Brunswick and Hajjar 1991 and Crossley and Murby 1994).

The fact that rural areas are comparatively less equipped with textbooks is a serious issue, when it is considered that in developing countries in rural areas, textbooks are frequently the sole academic source outside school (Crossley and Murby 1994). It is interesting for me to establish whether new policies have led

to a situation where every Mosotho child has all textbooks regardless of her/his socio-economic background and the area of the school she goes to.

It is timely to do the study on policy and practice in textbook distribution. As current policies have been in place long enough (1982-1998) for effects to become apparent and some judgement to be made about their efficacy. It should be possible, by now, to determine whether or not policy and practice has equalised book distribution between urban and rural schools.

In order to answer the research question, the study will describe and analyse the main characteristics of textbook distribution policy and practice at the levels of the Ministry of Education, the School Supply Unit and the schools.

1.4 QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDY

The major question for the study is: To what extent do current policies and practices promote equity and efficiency in textbook distribution specifically as regards urban and rural schools? In order to answer the above question the study asks the following sub-questions.

- (i) What are the policies and practices at the levels of the Ministry of Education, the School Supply Unit and the schools as regards textbook distribution?
- (ii) Do current policies and practices differentiate between urban and rural schools?
- (iii) How do the equity and efficiency components of policy and practice interrelate?

For purposes of this study, *rural schools* will refer to schools which are situated in the foothills and mountain areas of Lesotho. People who live in these areas will be referred to as *poor* because most of them are unemployed and live on subsistence farming. On the other hand, many people who live in *urban areas* are employed or self-employed.

1.5 PLAN FOR THE STUDY

This chapter presents the purpose and the background to the problem, the rationale and the significance of the study. It outlines objectives and questions raised by the study. Finally it outlines the structure of the report.

Chapter two provides a literature review and conceptual framework for the study. The literature on textbook distribution is reviewed and key concepts are discussed.

Chapter three outlines the methodology for the study and provides the setting, profiles of schools, criteria for selection of participants, techniques for data collection and framework for analysis.

Chapter four contains the data analysis. The chapter begins with the background to the development of book distribution policy in Lesotho. Two phases of policy development examined in terms of form and content of policy. The chapter also contains policy and practice relating to textbook distribution at the levels of the Ministry of Education, the School Supply Unit and the selected schools. It concludes by discussing the relationship between equity and efficiency with regard to book distribution in urban and rural schools.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 TEXTBOOK DISTRIBUTION LITERATURE

This study is based on the view that textbook distribution is not only a technical but also a social process (Brunswick and Hajjar 1990 and Crossley and Murby 1994). Since the study deals with an educational process which is also a social process it requires an approach that is holistic in nature. This means that the approach I use should allow me to see ‘reality through informants eyes’ (Bernard 1994 : 15) in order to establish how they account for their actions in the process of textbook distribution.

The study also assumes that textbook distribution is policy in action; it is a very complex process full of contradictions and different interpretations and is highly dependent on context. Thus, textbook distribution has to be understood to be a political process.

A literature search conducted for this study showed that very little related to textbook distribution has been written. Most of the literature treats textbook distribution as a sub-topic within a wider topic of textbook provision and/or development. However, relevant literature was helpful in providing insight into the distribution process, thereby serving as a guide to questions to be asked in the study and assisting in relation to the selection of data collection techniques to be employed in the study.

The section below is going to first consider the literature that explains differences in availability of textbooks in urban and rural schools with reference to space. Secondly, it will review the literature which attributes unequal distribution to inefficiency.

2.2 SPATIAL PATTERNS OF INEQUALITY IN TEXTBOOK DISTRIBUTION

The literature confirms that there tends to be spatial inequalities in textbook distribution between urban and rural areas. In a study whose primary objective was to provide a concise and critical introduction to the literature relating to textbook processes Crossley and Murby (1994 : 100) show that there are general textbook shortages in some African countries. Kenya and Zambia fare very badly in this regard. They quote Gannicott and Throsby (1992 : 90-93) who wrote that in

Tonga there continues to be a critical shortage of textbooks...
[and that] rural Fijian schools are much worse equipped with
textbooks ... than the mainly urban Indian schools.

Brunswick and Hajjar (1990) report on a seminar which dealt with 'planning textbook development for primary education in Africa.' They point out that textbooks are usually available in larger cities and, by implication, more accessible to urban schools.

Rural and urban distinctions are not just physical, they are also social (Lefevbre 1991). In the case of Lesotho those who live in the rural areas are also the poorest. The question raised by this study is whether policy and practices which aim to achieve equity should differentiate between distribution of textbooks to rural and urban areas.

2.3 LITERATURE THAT DEALS WITH EFFICIENCY IN TEXTBOOK DISTRIBUTION

Although, there is a lot written on textbook provision the process of textbook distribution appears to be a relatively unresearched area at present. The little available literature speaks about textbook distribution as a problematic process. (Sehlabi 1991, Education Commission of Report Botswana 1993 and Brunswick and Hajjar 1994).

In Botswana the National Commission on Education (1993) was formed to look at the education system in general. In its report, it deals with the topic of textbooks in detail. The report points out that the textbook provision scheme has developed in two phases with the first phase failing and necessitating improvements to the scheme. According to the report the present scheme is much better than the earlier one. However, there are several problems relating to the textbook distribution process. The snags in the process eventually lead to inequalities in textbook allocation among students and schools. The discrepancies mainly result from inefficiencies attributed to the different levels of organisations which are responsible for the process. For instance, the commission shows that generally there is a tendency not to observe deadlines by all who are involved in the process. Headmasters are blamed for not filling in required information correctly and the councils are accused of a lack of commitment.

In Lesotho Sehlabi attributes loopholes in textbook distribution to the inability of principals to fill in requisition forms correctly (1991). He also blames managers for dividing orders among schools including schools which did not submit order forms. Related to this issue is the point of schools which are inaccessible by road, where books are delivered to a particular place and are handed over to the schools by people who received them such as clinic

assistants, chiefs storekeepers etc. In such cases books normally take a long time to get to schools due to various reasons such as over flowing rivers.

2.4. CONCEPTS OF EQUITY AND EFFICIENCY IN EDUCATION

Equity

The concept of equity is linked with “conceptual and political baggage and is highly associated with justice” (Brine 1998 : 49). For instance, in the European Union the discourse of equity began as “a discourse of equal opportunities with a language that centred on ‘access’, ‘individual choice’ and ‘opportunity’ (Brine 1998 : 146). The term is sometimes used to mean ‘equal opportunities’ to cover the general policy field. This understanding takes cognisance of equalisation in terms of equality of input and considers education as being “concerned with access and opportunity” (Secada 1989 :69).

Secada notes that, in practical terms, equity is often defined in terms of equality between groups with equality being said to occur when parity is achieved between groups along the same agreed upon index. These usually quantitative indices may include, for example, pupil-teacher ratios, per capita spending, teacher qualification or whatever ...” (Gilmour 1992 :4). With this understanding of equity parity is conceived as an aggregate measure detailing differences or otherwise between definable groups.

In Australia ‘equity’ and ‘social justice’ mostly have come to be used as ‘umbrella’ terms to refer to policies which aim to address inequities in education. Equity in this case emphasises participation as well as outcomes in addressing educational inequities between social groups (Balogun 1994).

In South Africa the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) argues for “equalisation of education and elimination of differences” (NEPI 1991b : 1), and the African National Congress (ANC) sees “democratic access to education” (1991 : 21-22) linked to the creation of a “just society” as major objectives. In order to achieve the above objective the ANC and more particularly the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) believe in improving resources in order to be able to restructure the economy of the country.

In Lesotho the objective of the education system is the

attainment of universal basic education so that everyone will have the opportunity to develop competencies necessary for personal growth and for social life (Lesotho official Yearbook 1996 133).

This commitment is endorsed by the education policy of 1997 which is committed “to provide basic education for all ... and access to education for the disadvantaged groups” (Lesotho National Policy 1997 : 171). This understanding of equity takes for granted that equitable distribution of access to education will result in desired the outcomes for all.

A dilemma relating to the concept of equity is that there are inequalities between individuals and between groups. It then becomes a matter of deciding if it is individual or group differences which are addressed. In respect to equity serious problems also arise when one attempts to define groups. The question may be asked, are all children in rural schools ‘poor’? Clearly this is problematic when equitable distribution and financing strategies are planned. In this case what could be viewed as redress mechanisms could widen socio-economic differences among students and/or schools in the same rural areas thereby defeating the original conception (Gilmour 1992 : 5). This illustrates

some of the difficulties faced in attempting to come to a sense of equality in the context of equity among groups.

There is no doubt from the above discussion that equity is an important, common and highly desirable socio-economic and political value. Indeed Paquette provides a rich conceptual overview of competing concepts of equity in educational policy. He argues that despite the complex and contested nature of educational equity, the concepts “remains at the heart of *raison d’etre* of publicly funded education and is here to stay over a long time” (1998 : 49). Equity is a cornerstone of education policy in publicly funded mass education systems.

For the purposes of this study, equity is understood to mean equal distribution of resources, specifically textbooks, to schools. This is most consistent with the approach of Secada (1989) in Britain and NEPI (1991) in South Africa which prioritises equality of inputs.

Efficiency

This sections seeks to understand efficiency as defined in educational literature. The reason for this is that the literature has indicated that some problems in textbook distribution are attributable to inefficiency. Secondly, the study explores equity and efficiency as part of the focus of this study.

Balogun (1994 :91) writes that efficiency encompasses the notion of “goal attainment, quality and standard of service and client responsiveness.” As a matter of fact the literature on textbook distribution in Botswana and Lesotho has shown that efficiency is a precondition if books are to be equitably distributed to schools.

2.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EQUITY AND EFFICIENCY

Ironing out inefficiencies such as those mentioned above may, to some extent, improve equity by ensuring that poorer areas are not disadvantaged by weaker administrative capacity. However, equity and efficiency are not always compatible. There are also tensions between these goals. The tensions are usually a result of the value systems of those who implement policy.

The equity-efficiency debate is complex. There is a strong argument against policies aimed at equalising opportunities and outcomes for historically disadvantaged categories of persons. In the USA, for instance, the Bradley Foundation and the Heritage Foundation (as cited in Bacheron in 1988 and in Paquette 1998) constantly attack equalising education opportunities programmes by arguing for providing quality education for a more 'efficient' approach involving the 'best and brightest' (Paquette 1998 : 52). The implication of this approach may be to introduce discriminatory education in a vicious cycle where those who are valued as worthy benefit from the system while the weak ones are further disadvantaged. There is a view that equalising fiscal resources does not guarantee that the resources will be used in ways that are efficient and effective for students for which they are directed (Paquette 1998 : 53).

On the other hand there are people who argue strongly for efficient and equitable educational opportunities (COSATU 1991, Lesotho Yearbook 1996, The Lesotho Ministry of planning 1997, Crouch 1997 and Paquette 1998). They generally feel that equitable education can lead to efficiency.

In a report entitled 'Equity and Efficiency in Public Education Expenditure in South Africa : An Analysis of Recent Information' Crouch (1997) looks at the feasibility of 'free' education in South Africa. He also looks at the internal and external efficiency of education spending and makes an analysis that 'poorer'

groups spend much more on private education ... as a proportion of income, than do richer groups. The conclusion he reaches is that 'options for a system that is highly equitable but efficient will depend on devising creative solutions that make use of public and private sector contributions ... and that will create a system in which everyone has a stake and therefore a shared fate' (1997 : 27). User fees and the idea of public willingness to pay fees are important in this study because Lesotho parents pay reduced book rental fees in order to keep the revolving fund running and to have everybody feel a sense of having a stake in the process.

In support of user fees Crouch says that fees must be 'based on ability to pay for education out of private or community funds and must not be based on actual private or community contributions' (Crouch 1997 : 17). He proposes a gradient of public support and public governance, where better-off communities would be required to come up with more of their own funding and governance. He argues 'this would free up the limited funding and bureaucratic talent of the state to attend to the poor and to promote change-agency in rural and poor urban areas'. More innovative non-bureaucratic solutions can be tried with and by literate, urban, upper, middle and lower middle class parents, while state funding, bureaucratic, and change-agency talent, which is in short supply, can be dedicated to where it is mostly badly needed: the deep rural areas and the urban poor (1997 : 18). Crouch also encourages taking advantage of public willingness to pay for education as a gatekeeping mechanism to achieve an efficient educational funding system in South Africa.

Crouch's argument suggests that equity and efficiency may be in harmony with each other provided caution is practised in terms of selecting strategies that are suitable to different disadvantaged target groups. This is in agreement with Balogun (1994 : 90), when he writes that the relationship between equity and efficiency is that the two are potentially compatible values. This was confirmed by Hossein (1997) when he wrote that China has made impressive gains in

human resource development in the past two decades, and continuing to do so will help reduce poverty in two ways: indirectly by increasing productivity and efficiency of its labour force, and directly by fostering the earning capacity of the poor. Eventually, human resources will spur economic growth and enhance welfare.

Paquette (1998 : 53) argues for prioritising equity in education provision. According to him ‘it is only when sufficient and appropriate resources are made available to those who are outside that circle that the educationally disadvantaged have a chance of breaking the meritocratic circle.’

Paquette also argues that compensatory education should be offered provided the educational services offered are efficient and effective. He says

neglecting or obfuscating the equity imperative of public education will not make it go away. Disarmed by post-modern divergence on what should constitute basic knowledge, skills, values and commitments the overwhelming majority of the young should share, both the political left and right seem alarmingly susceptible to empty euphemisms of excellence for all and to the facile and largely symbolic policy making they engender. Equity in educational policy making appears to be in trouble in the short term and, optimistically, in fundamental transition over the longer term (1998 : 58).

Paquette (1998) points to perceived tensions between equity and efficiency epitomised by “a general reaction against redress programmes evident in neo-conservative politics of among other places the USA and Britain” (Paquette 1998 : 52). He attributes this to the general feeling that

policies aimed at equalising opportunities and outcomes
for historically disadvantaged categories of persons result

in economic inefficiencies and institutionalise the inequity of reverse discrimination (1998 : 52).

In this light equity becomes the consequence of a politically defined initiative. According to Paquette arguments against equity are based on sectoral interests.

Conclusion

The Lesotho education department approach to textbook distribution is closest to that which Crouch recommends for education financing in South Africa. In this system of education spending a private willingness to spend money on education is combined with public sector contributions. With this kind of system in place the state retains control and communities are required to contribute. Education is affordable to all because it is subsidised by government yet private contributions enhance efficiency.

This approach is inherently inequitable. In the case of Crouch's model the poor contribute nothing or very little while the middle class and the rich contribute more in education spending. This enables the rich to add more value to the schooling of their children, while the poor cannot do this. In the case of Lesotho, although fees are reduced to supposedly affordable levels, some people still cannot afford to pay book rental fees. However, it can be said that the model which uses private expenditure enhances efficiency in that the public feels involved and feels a sense of ownership, common goal and "a shared fate" in education. This study sets out to explore the realisation of this approach to textbook distribution as implemented in Lesotho with particular reference to the relationship between equity and efficiency in practice.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

This is a case study which seeks to answer the questions: to what extent do policies and practices promote equity and efficiency in textbook distribution; how does this differ between two selected urban and rural Lesotho primary schools and how are equity and efficiency related. In order to be able to answer the questions in a holistic manner, policy and practice at the levels of the Ministry of Education , the School Supply Unit and school level were studied. This was done because it is believed that policy and practice at the higher levels directly and/or indirectly influence policy and practice at the lower levels, and vice versa.

The research employs a case study approach because the study is an enquiry about a social phenomena which needs to be traced over time. As a research strategy a case study enabled me to do an empirical investigation of policy and practice at the three levels of policy implementation. Secondly, it allowed me to use multiple sources of evidence. The use of more than one strategy for collecting data enabled me to deal “with many possible foci of policy implementation process and change” (Robson 1993 : 147).

The flexible nature of the case study approach provided the means for me to do an emergent design. While I had the main questions at the beginning of the study, sub-questions needed to be asked in order to answer the major question. When I got to the field I was able to adapt questions to explore policy and practice at different focal points.

Secondly, the emergent nature of the strategy empowered me to add more participants to the list of participants. Initially, I did not intend to interview textbook printers but I thought it would be important to interview one of them because they were sometimes mentioned as the cause for the delays in textbook distribution. This means a case study approach enabled evidence to unfold naturally thereby minimising my biases and misconceptions about issues under study.

3.2 SETTING

The study took place in Lesotho, a developing country landlocked by the Republic of South Africa. To date Lesotho is still rural with about 84% of the households found in the rural areas (Lesotho Statistical Yearbook 1994 : 7). Education in Lesotho is not free parents pay tuition and book rental fees. The books are purchased with money from a revolving fund particularly meant to subsidise textbooks. The revolving fund is money that is allowed to accumulate overtime before use.

The economy of the country is dependent on agriculture and remittances from citizens working in South Africa. Agriculture accounts for approximately one fifth of the Gross National Product (GNP) but employs two thirds of the workforce (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1993). ‘Lesotho’s 1995 per capita GNP was M2206 (equivalent to \$613)’ (Lesotho Sixth National Plan 1996/7-1998/9) The Sixth National Plan shows that 50% of the households in Lesotho are poor and more than 25% are very poor.

It is estimated that 90% of the poor and very poor live in rural areas. Mountain areas such as Thaba-Tseka, and Mokhotlong and the Senqu Valley experience the deepest and most severe

poverty, estimated at double the national average (Lesotho Statistical Yearbook 1994 : 1).

3.3 FOCAL POINTS WITHIN THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

In order to be able to make a comparison of policy and practice in textbook distribution between urban and rural areas, two schools were selected on the basis of accessibility and typicalness. The schools belong to the same district, namely the Maseru district. Both are public primary schools served by the School Supply Unit.

I selected one urban and one rural school because I hoped to determine whether social space impacts on the process of book distribution, resulting in differences of equity and efficiency in each case.

The process of textbook distribution involves printers, curriculum developers, writers, distributors (in this case the Ministry of Education through SSU), publishers, schools and parents. However, I felt that since the topic involves textbook distribution policy and practice, the following focal points are directly related to the study:

- (i) **The Ministry of Education** which is the principal policy making body for education.
- (ii) **The School Supply Unit** which is responsible for the book supply scheme, and acts as a mediator between government and schools.

(iii) **Schools** as places to which books are distributed, as source of funding for the scheme and as the key implementers of policy.

3.4 PROFILES OF SCHOOLS

The two schools fall within national policy, as implemented by the SSU. One of the purposes of the research is to establish whether these policies and practices result in differences in book distribution to the two schools.

School A

As has already been mentioned, school A is situated in a rural setting in the country side. It serves students from the neighbouring villages. Most of the students in this rural area come from families where fathers are the sole bread winners and are working in the mines of South Africa. In cases like this, mothers are left home to bring up children and to look after the aged. Many mothers can do only basic reading and writing in Sesotho. This means they are not employable.

At this school admission is flexible. There is no age restriction. The only time there are likely to be problems relating to admission into the school is if the child has been to 'lebollo' or initiation school. The school is a missionary school and practices of 'lebollo' are unacceptable to the church. There are 378 children and 9 teachers at the school. The children are aged 6-16. The school has classes from standard 1-7 and teaches Mathematics, Science, English, Agriculture, Social Studies and Sesotho.

The school was accessible to me as I have a relative in the vicinity of school with whom I could stay. This enabled me to save travel costs as well as accommodation costs.

School B

School B is a working class school situated in the outskirts of the capital town, Maseru. The school has an enrolment of about 800 children and a staff of 21 teachers. Most children who come to this school have parents who do casual work and some of them are single parents who come to town to make ends meet. At this school the age of children ranges from 6-13 years. This school also has classes 1-7 and teaches the same subjects as School A.

It may be expected that book distribution is comparatively efficient at this school because the school is near the headquarters of the School Supply Unit and is comfortably situated in the vicinity of advanced communication technology compared to School A. School B is in town and it was easy for me to commute from my home to school everyday therefore entailing lower costs.

3.5 TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION

To develop an account of policy and practice various research techniques were employed. Because the topic deals with an issue which is a complex social process, a qualitative flexible approach was utilised. In order to develop an account of the book distribution policy, relevant documents were reviewed and interviews were conducted at all three levels.

Policy documents were analysed in order to provide insights into the content of the policy. Interviews were used to investigate how people who are involved in

the process understand policy and their practices towards implementing that policy. Interviews with participants from all levels, together with an inventory and an analysis of procedural documents such as order forms were utilised to explore practices that are meant to actualise policy at school level.

It is believed that by employing different data collection methods a wider spectrum of information is accessed (Maykut and Morehouse 1994). I relied on qualitative methods including in-depth interviewing, a questionnaire, analysis of documents and procedural material and inventory taking. The inductive nature of these strategies capture participant's perspectives and practices as they happen naturally in the field (Maykut and Morehouse 1994). They enabled me to examine how those being studied make sense out of policy texts and how their practices actualise these texts. I was interested in how the actors interpret their experiences of the process.

There were differences that arose in the kind of data that emerged from different data collection strategies. Documents generally provided data relating to policy aims, objectives, legislation and procedures to be followed in the process of distributing books. Interviews and the questionnaire provided accounts of participants views, attitudes, perspectives, expectations and practices. Inventories supplied data related to the bureaucratic process and related records. There were, for example, records of how many books were ordered and how many were received. These records helped to establish the actual student textbook ratios in the schools.

3.5.1 INTERVIEWS

Interviews formed the major part of the investigation strategy. They were conducted over a two week period in a variety of settings. In all cases stratified

selection was done by dividing the population according to occupation in each organisation. From each stratum a selection was done to improve the reliability of the results of research. Participants were chosen because they were likely to be knowledgeable and informative about textbooks distribution policy and practice at different levels of the process.

The range of people interviewed was based on a conception of textbook distribution as a social process. It was assumed therefore that there would be significant differences in responses of the people involved in different ways. The differences would probably be due to the professional responsibilities of the participants as well as personal factors. It was felt it would be necessary to deal with the widest spectrum possible of those involved in the process. Participants involved in the process from management to the grass roots would yield insights to the topic. The intention was "to increase the utility of information obtained from small cases" (Macmillan and Schumacher 1993 : 378).

All in-depth interviews were originally prepared in English and were subjected to discussion with my supervisor. Necessary modifications were incorporated and were then translated to Sesotho. All interviews were recorded, simultaneously transcribed, and translated back to English. The translations were done by me because I am a Sesotho Speaker.

Interviews were conducted at different places. They were conducted at the School Supply Unit with the manager, the fieldworker and the driver. Principals and school committee members were interviewed at the schools. In the case of the printing press a manager of one printing press was interviewed as part of the emergent design.

Interviews were first conducted at the School Supply Unit in the following order: manager's interview, fieldworker's interview and the driver's interview. The logic behind this order was first of all to establish the policy objectives for the scheme from the manager who is responsible for the unit. The fieldworker came second because she has knowledge of both policy content and practice because she works with both the administration of the unit and the people at grass roots namely teachers and parents.

The driver was interviewed last because he is directly involved in delivering books from school to school and has first hand information about book delivery. Generally the School Supply Unit was the starting point because it provided a context for understanding policies at school level. I expected that the schools' implementation of the policy would be based on the wider policy of textbook distribution. Secondly, the school in the rural areas was visited first to take advantage of the dry weather before the onset of summer rains.

(i) *The School Supply Unit manager's in-depth interview* focused on SSU policy and practice in relation to book distribution. This interview was helpful in providing the SSU manager's understanding of policy objectives and expectations at national and at SSU level.

(ii) *The fieldworker's in-depth interview* was used to elicit the fieldworker's understanding of policy and practice at national and school level. The fieldworker acts as a mediator between the School Supply Unit and the schools. This interview focused on equity and efficiency in textbook distribution to pupils in urban and rural schools.

(iii) *The Driver in-depth interview* focused on a selected driver's understanding and experiences regarding differences in transport practices to urban and rural schools and transportation policy.

(iv) *Principal's in-depth interviews*-focused on school policies and practices, how and when requisition forms are filled in and sent to the unit, how and when books get to schools, the role of parents in the process and procedures of collecting book rental fees. Principals were asked whether books reached their particular schools efficiently and equitably.

(v). *School committee members' in-depth interviews* were used to find out parents' views on the scheme, the role played by parents in the process, their wishes and expectations. These interviews provided parents' views on payment practices at the schools.

3.5.2 QUESTIONNAIRE

(i) A questionnaire was sent to the Ministry official responsible for the School Supply Unit, as it was not possible to interview this person. This questionnaire was helpful in providing an official account of policy and practice at ministerial level. This included objectives of the scheme, its aspirations, expectations, the meaning of equitable distribution of textbooks as defined by the ministry and the ministry's practices in actualising policy.

3.5.3 INVENTORY TAKING AT THE SCHOOLS

An inventory was taken to establish which books were in each school, how many there were, what the student textbook ratios were per class per subject and to compare books which were ordered to those that were received for 1997. This focused on policy and practice between the schools and SSU in terms of whether books were equitably distributed to schools or not.

School A was visited twice while school B was visited three times. The difference in the number of visits was due to the fact that school B has a higher enrolment and it took a longer time to take the inventory at this school. Secondly, teachers in school A stay on school campus, thus it was possible to stay until after working hours to take an inventory. Staying at the school until after hours was not possible in the case of school B where teachers commuted to school from their homes everyday.

3.5.4 DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS

(i) *Procedural documents* provided evidence of the design of the process. This included requisition forms, inventory forms, receipts and bank statements. The documents were mainly helpful in developing an account of official procedures for ordering and receiving books. Correspondence between SSU and the school was also examined. This information was available for school B. The principal of school A was not prepared to give me what he called ‘confidential office material’.

The procedural documents provided illustrations of official or intended practice both at the levels of the school and the SSU, in terms of how the school makes orders and how the SSU responds to orders with regard to meeting deadlines and sending required books.

(ii) *Documents* were critically reviewed to gain insight into policy form and content in relation to the textbook distribution process. After examining a range of documents such as reports, books, brochures, the ministry’s external circulars and speeches of the Minister of Education, it was decided that

particular Education External Circulars of the Ministry of Education were key documents which should be selected for analysis.

Specific documents which were selected for analysis are:

(i). Education External Circular No. 37 of 1982 entitled 'The Establishment of Book Provision Scheme for Primary Schools'. This document was selected because it is the policy document that launched the book provision scheme. Thus it forms the basis for textbook distribution policy and practice in the country.

(ii). Education External Circular No. 21 of 1988 entitled 'Policy changes on book rental fee collection'. This circular was selected because it confers power to principals to take over the task of collecting and banking money. It tightens policy procedures. Thus, it has had a significant influence on the current policy practices.

(iii). Education External Circular No. 21 of 1993 entitled 'Improvements in the System of Book Distribution for Lesotho Primary Schools.' This document was selected because it aims to tighten policy that deals with improvements on textbook distribution procedures.

(iv). Education External Circular No.8 of 1996 entitled 'Pokello ea Chelete Khirong ea Libuka Likolong tsa Mathomō' (meaning collection of book rental fees at primary schools), was also selected. This was regarded as a key document because unlike previous circulars which were largely procedural, this document is a warning to principals and managers who divert book rental fees or use them for their personal gain.

3.6 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants at the three levels of the Ministry of Education, the School Supply Unit, and the two schools were selected on the basis of their occupation. At the Ministry of Education a senior official responsible for the process was selected. At the School Supply Unit, the manager, a fieldworker and a driver were selected as key people involved in the process.

In school A, a headmaster and her deputy were interviewed. The latter was interviewed because he is in charge of textbooks in the school. A member of the school committee was also interviewed at this school. At school B a headmaster and a member of the school committee were interviewed. The school committee member for school B was not interviewed because he did not turn up due to unforeseen circumstances.

A printing press manager was interviewed though he was not part of the initial sample design. As the investigation progressed printing and publishing companies were mentioned as causes of delays in the distribution process. The emergent design of the study, in terms of which participants accounts influenced the direction of the study, led me to interview the printing manager to gain an insight into the perspective of printers and publishers. The particular printing manager was selected on the basis of accessibility because his company operates from town.

In the case of the schools, school committee members were selected by the headmasters on the basis of availability.

3.7 FRAMEWORK FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The assumption that underlies the research design is that policy and practice of textbook distribution needs to be analysed in relation to the way it is recontextualised and reinterpreted at every level.

The analysis aimed to find how actors at the different levels understand, interpret and practice the policy and how their interpretation and understanding of policy shaped their practice specifically with reference to promoting equity and efficiency between urban and rural schools. This way of analysing data is in harmony with the mode of qualitative research which is interested in participants interpretation of their own experiences (Maykut and Morehouse 1994).

Field notes were used to build profiles for the two schools. The purpose was to characterise each school and identify factors that affected textbook distribution practices within a given locality.

3.8 DEVELOPMENT OF A DATA ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

The data analysis framework has been greatly influenced by the question, the objectives of the study, the conceptual framework, the data and the literature. First, the question focused on the extent to which policy and practice promote equity and efficiency in textbook distribution to urban and rural schools. The question itself raised several questions about meanings of concepts such as policy and practice, urban and rural, the relationship between equity and efficiency

These concepts led me to do interviews to establish meanings of the words and to get information about the connection between equity and efficiency, policy

and practice. Later the principal ideas were put in the context of the study through a conceptual framework. These words served as initial categories and were later confirmed by data that was collected.

The theoretical propositions that guided the study were that

(i) policy has a history and is reformulated; the discourses of policy change over time (Ball 1994)

(ii) there is a relationship between equity and efficiency (Balogun 1994).

(iii) policy and practice inform each other.

(iv) Lefebvre (1991), Soja (1989) and Massey (1992) say that the differences between social practices in different places are not only determined by physical factors but also by social factors. In other words, spatial differences in social action are political.

The case study was based on the above propositions. The propositions emerged from the literature review and inform the question and the conceptual framework.

In order to develop the chronological account of textbook policy development, documents namely circulars, textbooks and government documents were arranged in chronological order. The logic behind this was to establish if the form changed as the policy was developed. Secondly, the same documents were analysed with regard to content to ascertain the shifts in discourses and reinterpretations of policy (Ball 1994). All of the above assisted in compiling a chronological account of the policy.

Policy and practice were analysed by classifying the data in three groups namely, (i) documents to get evidence on form and content. (ii) Interviews and questionnaire to get participants views on policies and practices and (iii) inventory and procedural documents to get data for actual practices at the level of the schools.

In relation to content, data was analysed in relation to categories based on the theoretical propositions. This was done by first looking at the content of policy documents which established that textbook distribution policy developed in two phases. Policy form and content was analysed for the first phase. For the second phase form and content together with policy practices were analysed at the level of The Ministry of Education, the School Supply Unit and the schools.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The history of the policy of textbook distribution to Lesotho primary schools can be traced back to 1982 and has "undergone contests and shifts or recontextualisations" (Ball 1994 : 16-17). During its development the policy has taken various forms and there have been changes in approach and in the dominant discourses.

The present chapter analyses past and present policy content and form in terms of the degree to which equity and efficiency are achieved specifically between urban and rural contexts and the ways in which equity and efficiency are related. It will examine present policy practices at the levels of the Ministry of Education, the School Supply Unit and at the schools. First, the two phases of policies of the department and unit will be analysed in terms of form and content. Lastly current practices will be examined at the three levels.

4.2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TWO PHASES OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this section is to provide an historical account of book distribution policy in Lesotho as a context for the discussion that follows. It is located in this chapter because data collected from this study has been utilised to develop this account.

In response to the declaration of the African Ministers of education at the OAU/UNESCO sponsored conference in Lagos, 1976, which resolved that each nation should renew its education system, the government of Lesotho formed the National Education Dialogue (NED) in 1978. The NED was an

effort to exchange ideas with the people and to provide them with a platform from which to declare their education needs (Education Sector Survey report of the task force 1982 : ix). The NED brought together district development committees; school manager; headteachers; representatives of school committees; teachers organisations; members of parliament; representatives of chiefs and other interested members of the public.

Generally, the NED had expressed

a sense of frustration concerning the educational system, and had reflected the wide spread feeling that it was time to take a comprehensive look at the provision of education and training in Lesotho, to see how the education system might make a greater contribution to the country's development and prosperity (Education Sector survey report of the task force 1982 : xi).

The other salient issue that emanated from the deliberations of NED was the public expression and 'evidence from educators that there had been marked decline in the performance of students in the basic skills of reading and writing (Education Sector Survey report of the task force 1982 : xi). As a result, cabinet established an Educational Sector Task force. Its main task was

to prepare a policy document in the field of education, that could guide government in planning an education system that was appropriate (Education Sector Survey report of the task force 1982 : xi)

to the development and needs of Lesotho.

The NED recommended that a multi-disciplinary task force composed of nationals and expatriates be formed, to carry out a thorough analysis of the problems facing the education system, and to present to government a set of objectives and their implications (Education Sector Task Force report 1982 : ix).

As a result of the recommendations made by NED, in 1980 J. E. Anderson, an international consultant on curriculum and learning materials development was invited to make a comprehensive and intensive analysis of the Lesotho Education system with particular focus on the curriculum. Secondly, he looked at the prospects of book provision and learning materials for primary schools. Chapter five of his report is dedicated to the provision of primary school textbooks and the prospects of a national book service. In it, he proposed a plan for the national textbook provision scheme. Anderson's plan and recommendations indicated a high possibility of a successful establishment of the textbook provision scheme.

Prior to 1983 primary schools in Lesotho used different textbooks, depending on the title selected by a particular school. This created problems for the students in many ways. For instance, if a student changed schools, she/he might be required to purchase new textbooks because "book used at the new school were different from those used at the previous school" (School Supply Unit information 17 November 1988 : not numbered).

Again, due to the geographical and economic position of some places book distribution centres stocked only minimum numbers of textbooks (School Supply Unit information 17 November 1988 : not numbered).

In order to alleviate the above problems, together with the problem of the decline in the quality of education, the Lesotho government decided to introduce common textbooks throughout the country's primary schools and to make such books available at a price that is affordable to all parents. In 1983, a book supply unit was formed under the Training for Self-Reliance project (TSRP).

The Book Supply Unit supplied textbooks in three core subjects namely Sesotho, English and Mathematics. In 1985 science and social subjects were introduced to the scheme. Three years later, the scheme was extended to include provision of equipment for practical subjects and the scheme was renamed School Supply Unit (SSU). When the TSRP was dissolved in 1993, the SSU was taken over by the Ministry of Education.

With some degree of simplification, two developmental phases of textbook distribution policy in Lesotho can be identified from the reports which were reviewed. The two phases are differentiated in that different management structures have been involved with the project. The first phase occurred between 1982 and 1993 under the Training for self-reliance Project. The second phase took place from 1993 to the present under the management of the ministry of Education through the School Supply Unit.

4.3 PHASE ONE : NATIONAL POLICY

This section analyses policy communication including circulars and workshops. In the context of this study workshops are regarded as policy communication because, at the workshops, policy is introduced and interpreted to stakeholders. Workshops serve as a way of arriving at single interpretations and complementary actions in policy practice. Workshops are held so that all stakeholders act in harmony to accomplish the objectives of policy. So it can be said that workshops are a hands-on simplified form of policy communication for people who implement policy at the practical grassroots level, just as documents communicate policy to more sophisticated stakeholders.

Secondly, this section will analyse the content of textbook distribution policy at national level. With regard to content particular focus will be on the

definition of procedures that are aimed at ensuring efficiency or equity in textbook distribution to students and schools.

4.3.1 THE FORM OF NATIONAL TEXTBOOK DISTRIBUTION POLICY

Phase one of textbook distribution policy launched the scheme under the Training for Self-Reliance Project. The initial policy takes the form of circulars (Education External Circular No. 37 of 1982 and No. 12 of 1988) and workshops for headteachers and managers. The scheme was launched with Education External Circular No. 37 of 1982. The circular was a document of less than ten pages issued by the Ministry of Education. It introduced a national policy. According to the government official responsible for SSU who participated in the study,

there is no comprehensive policy document but there are some circulars... indicating the objectives of the scheme and how it operates (Head of the Curriculum services Department 1998 questionnaire).

The fact that there is no comprehensive statement of policy for textbook distribution was confirmed by the manager of the unit and the field officer.

At the workshops brochures and list of contents for the workshop were issued. The brochures were written in Sesotho and were less formal in terms of the layout and design than the circulars. They were written in note form and had pictures. At the end of the brochure the manager invites people to ask for further clarification if they wish to do so and gives his address. Thus as policy texts, the brochures took consideration of different participants who practice policy hence the discourse changes to suit the participants at the workshop. This is very important given that in the context of Lesotho some of

the managers are not necessarily educated but hold management positions because they are appointed to the positions of manager by the church.

4.3 THE CONTENT OF NATIONAL TEXTBOOK POLICY (PHASE ONE)

The first circular for the scheme (Education External Circular No. 37 of 1982) sets objectives for the establishment of the scheme. The document was divided into two main sections namely the objectives, duties and responsibilities and regulations for the scheme.

First the circular sets out the major objectives for the scheme. These are to provide basic sets of instructional materials to all children by 1986 (par. (a)); to ensure that every pupil in the primary schools throughout the country has access to these materials at an over all reduced cost and to provide initial financing for the establishment of a revolving fund(par (b). The circular advises addressees on the developments and resulting directive control measures relating to the subject of textbooks and instructional materials.

Secondly, the circular stipulates directives to schools; reserves certain rights for the Ministry of Education; outlines the duties and responsibilities of the Book Supply Unit and promises further considerations of issue of books to 'poor' students (Education External Circular No. 37 of 1982 : 6). In order therefore, to improve equity of textbook distribution, to ensure that materials used are of a high standard and to ensure that every pupil in the primary schools throughout the country has access to these materials at the over all reduced cost, the Lesotho government, in consultation with the school proprietors, reserved the right to approve the use of textbooks and the subsidised fees of textbooks (Education External Circular No. 37 1982 : 2).

The above circular does not differentiate between urban and rural schools nor does it specify equity in relation to place (urban or rural). Instead it deals with equity in terms of social groups. For instance, some of the objectives of the scheme are 'to provide basic sets of instructional materials to all children by 1986 and to ensure that every pupil in the primary schools throughout the country has access to these materials at the over all reduced cost' (Education circular No. 37 of 1982 : 2). The two objectives demonstrate government's commitment to equity through uniform delivery to all.

The circular deals with issues of efficiency by laying down procedures, duties and responsibilities and regulations to increase efficiency in the process of book distribution. The procedures that are discussed in the circular can be divided into two types namely procedures for ordering and receiving books and procedures for collecting levies for book usage by students. In connection with the latter, procedures are that teachers should fill in requisition forms on the basis of school enrolments and submit forms to the District Education Office. The forms would be send to SSU which would pack books on the basis of the information in requisition forms and deliver the books to schools. With regard to money collections, teachers would collect money from parents and would hand the money over to the school managers who would deposit the money into the account of the unit.

Although the circular is clear about procedures of book ordering and money collection, it does not address the issue of ensuring equity between children in terms of whether they can afford to pay for books or not. It does not spell out procedural ways of identifying poor or rural students.

The second circular defining distribution policy is the Ministry of Education External circular No. 32 of 1988 which launched the Lesotho School Supply Unit. With the launch of the Lesotho School Supply Unit, the unit acquired

an additional responsibility to supply science materials to secondary and high schools.

With the establishment of the Lesotho School Supply Unit regulations and procedures for textbook distribution changed (par. 1). The significant changes which were made in circular No. 37 related to regulations regarding collection of book rental fees. The change was that school managers would no longer be responsible for collecting and depositing money but rather the headmasters were now given the responsibility of collecting and depositing money into the bank. According to the manager of the unit changes to the procedures of collecting were made to ease the lengthy process of collection of fees which often created problems; in some cases money would be collected from parents but would never reach the unit.

Point (2) of the circular brings attention to management committees that all other responsibilities which relate to School Supply Unit activities entrusted upon them remain unchanged.

Although, the Education External circular No. 37 of 1982 promises to consider distributing resources equitably to 'poor' pupils on the basis of the findings of a pilot project, circular No. 32 of 1988 is silent on this matter and does not raise issues about equity at all. Instead, the circular is elaborate on issues relating to procedures of collection of book rental fees.

In a workshop that was held for headmasters and school managers on issues that relate to procedures of textbook distribution, a brochure was handed out. The contents in the brochure dealt generally with information about the SSU, the revolving fund, advantages to the school and problems encountered by the unit. Equity is not mentioned at all in this document. However, issues of efficiency are dealt with. For instance, the pictures explain the procedures

of book distribution. The pictures show SSU staff loading boxes of books into a truck up to the manager who is carrying a briefcase to the bank. In this brochure the unit uses pictures and prose to relay information about distribution procedures. The emphasis is on procedures and the responsibilities of participants in the process to achieve greater efficiency.

The list of contents that was issued at the workshop does not have equity as one of the topics that would be addressed at the workshop. Although the managers were invested with the responsibility to identify 'poor' students in the pilot project, that is not an issue at this workshop in which managers are participating. There is no follow up on the issue of how students who cannot afford to pay will be identified and assisted. The issue of inequalities between urban and rural schools is not considered in the second circular, brochure and the list of contents for the workshop. As in the preceding circulars there is no differentiation either between urban and rural schools or social groups.

4.4 PHASE TWO : POLICY AND PRACTICE

This section will be approached in a slightly different manner from the section on Phase One. Like the other section, the present section will examine current policy form and content and will also find out whether there is differentiation in distribution between urban and rural schools or not. However, it will also examine practice at the levels of the Ministry of Education, School Supply Unit and schools A and B.

4.4.1 FORM

Phase two of the textbook distribution policy will be referred to as current or present policy. As in the previous policy, policy at this stage still takes the form of circulars, and workshops. The circulars are Education External Circular No. 21 of 1993 and No. 8 of 1996.

The 1993 external circular entitled 'Improvements in the System of Book Distribution in Schools' is a document that forms the basis of present textbook distribution policy. It is a one page circular addressed to headteachers and school managers. Copies were sent to Educational Secretaries, District Education officers District Resource teachers, National Curriculum Development Centre and School Supply Unit. Circular No. 8 of 1996 is a page long letter to teachers and managers signed by the Principal Secretary of Education.

4.4.2 CONTENT

Present textbook distribution policy is generally a correctional phase. It aims to correct problems that arose from the initial textbook distribution policy. The distribution improvement circular of 1993 is different from the initial policy because it tightens up distribution procedures. It is an outline of deadlines to be observed and procedures to be followed in the process of book distribution - from collection of forms from District Education Offices by principals to the collection of book rental fees. Since the circular is a one page document I will present all the points that it deals with. The Procedures for ordering and for the distribution of textbooks are as follows:

1. Headteachers of primary schools will collect **requisition forms** from the District Education offices shortly before or after schools open in January.
2. Immediately **after the (3) weeks** of temporary registration in February, the headteacher fills in the information required in the requisition form.
3. Properly filled in forms, white copies only will then be sent to education where they are expected to reach **before 20 of February**.

4. Books will be packed by SSU and delivered to parishes, or other destinations as usual beginning last week of February until the end of March.

5. The only way to inform SSU about requirements will be to fill the requisition form as specified. And books will only be delivered once a year per requisition (Education External Circular No. 21 of 1993 : 1).

The circular concludes by making two important announcements to schools. First, schools which do not fill in requisition forms stand a chance of not getting books. Secondly, teachers are advised that actual enrolments of pupils in each class per school must be clearly and appropriately shown in the forms to facilitate processing of distribution (Education External Circular No. 21 of 1993: 1).

The Education external Circular No. 8 of 1996 is generally a warning and a legal notice document to teachers and managers who collect book usage fees from parents but do not hand over money collected to the School Supply Unit. The circular is written in Sesotho because it is addressed to, among others, school committee members, some of whom may not be well-versed with English. The circular focuses on funding specifically the payment of book usage fees by parents. According to the current policy for book provision, schools which are in arrears with regard to payment of fees do not get books.

Generally, the two circulars which form current policy are meant to address aspects of the then existing dysfunctional policy. They are aimed at setting the record straight so that each of the actors knows what is expected of him or her in terms of meeting deadlines, collecting fees and following procedures for book acquisition (Education External Circular No. 37 of 1982; *No. 21* of 1993 and No. 8 of 1996).

Current policy focuses on improvements on procedural issues and deadlines to be observed by all who are involved with the process of distributing books. Although circular No. 8 of 1996 deals with rent collections, it does not address the issue of pupils who cannot afford to pay but rather tightens mechanisms for collecting money. It does not address situations where teachers may not be handing money over to the unit because parents cannot afford to pay. It assumes that all parents have the capacity to pay. According to the official who responded on behalf of the Ministry of Education "presently all children are expected to pay". The fieldworker also indicated that she encourages parents to do piece jobs in order to be able to pay for books.

The issue of equity between urban and rural areas is not addressed in the three documents. In other words rural schools are expected to follow procedures and observe deadlines the same way as urban schools. The fact that rural areas are physically disadvantaged is not considered in these documents. Rather current policy is preoccupied with how best distribution procedures can be improved to achieve higher efficiency. Unlike initial policy texts which mentioned government's intention to consider social inequalities, present policy is silent on the issues of equity of any type.

In a workshop that the School Supply Unit held for managers in 1996, a list of points to be remembered by attendants of the workshop did not include issues of equity. The list is a reminder about general issues and collection of rental money. For example, "ke boikarabello ba motsamaisi e mong le e mong ho bona hore likolo tsa hae li lefile ka nako" literally meaning, it is the responsibility of every manager to see to it that his schools have paid in time. "Chelete ea libuka e lebeletsoe ho finyella S.S.U. PELE kolo libuloa 'me e lefshoa bankeng kapa S.S.U. ka kotloloho". This means that book rental fees

are expected to reach the School Supply Unit before schools open and should be deposited at the bank or paid directly to the School Supply Unit. As in the previous phase, the current policy phase does not recognise differences between pupils in urban and rural areas.

4.5 POLICY IN PRACTICE

The discussion on policy content has shown that the Lesotho textbook distribution policy is predominantly procedural and that there is an intention to differentiate between poor and rich pupils or urban and rural schools in the original conception of the policy. The discussion has shown that the current policy mainly tightens procedures of textbook provision which had deteriorated during phase one.

This section aims to establish whether there is differentiation in practice in the way books are distributed between schools and pupils. Practice will be examined at three levels namely the Ministry of Education, the School Supply Unit and the schools. At the first two levels policy and practice will be examined. With regard to the schools' policy and practice will be compared to identify differences between schools within a rural and an urban setting.

4.5.1 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION : POLICY IN PRACTICE

The Ministry of education like many other similar ministries in other countries may be seen as being faced with a duty to provide education to all Basotho children. This duty is seen in terms of the social values of "equity, quality and relevance" (Education External Circular No. 37 of 1982 : 1). The ministry views policy as a way of achieving the above values. The ministry formed the SSU and has continued to support it by issuing the following circulars, Education External Circular No. 37 of 1982, No. 32 of 1987, No.

21 of 1993 and No. 8 of 1996. The main thrust of the circulars is to ensure that distribution of textbooks to schools is efficient.

In addition to providing regulation through circulars the Ministry of Education bears the expenses of salaries for officials at the School Supply Unit. If there is a shortage of staff at the unit the ministry lends staff to the School Supply Unit to increase efficiency. For instance, the structure of the School Supply Unit shows that at one point in time the ministry lends out an accounts assistant, a storekeeper, driver, personnel and the executive officer. To make sure that the policy works the ministry lent out a truck from a unit known as School Facilities Unit (SFU) which is responsible for providing buildings to schools (Research field notes from SSU).

It is acknowledged, at the level of the ministry, that there is no single definition statement of distribution policy. According to the ministry's official who was in-charge of the SSU, "there is no comprehensive policy document but there are some circulars and gazettes indicating the objectives of the scheme and how it operates" (Ministry of Education questionnaire February, 1998). The official indicated that the policy of the unit is to reduce the cost of primary education to parents of all learning. She pointed out that "currently there is no differentiation between urban and rural schools ... and presently all students are expected to pay" (Ministry of Education questionnaire February, 1998). She went on to say

However, in view of the policy of poverty eradication adopted by government in the current development plan, the rural areas specially in the mountain districts have been identified as hard-hit by poverty therefore, pupils in these areas will be assisted with school fees (Ministry of Education questionnaire February, 1998).

These are general statements of intent that are not yet realised in more specific distribution policy and practice.

In response to the question: what does the policy say about equity in textbook distribution? The official said,

books are distributed to all schools which have paid the required fee and have submitted statistical information regarding the number of pupils per class (ministry of education questionnaire February, 1998).

About efficiency she said that the books should reach the schools before the start of the school year and teachers should report torn books so that they can be replaced. She went on to say,

the ministry ensures that books are equitably delivered to schools in urban and rural areas simultaneously and ensures that policy is implemented efficiently through SSU which prepares annual plans and reports on the implementation of these plans (Ministry of Education questionnaire February, 1998).

4.5.2 POLICY AND PRACTICE AT THE SCHOOL SUPPLY UNIT

Documents which were reviewed do not show differences in the way schools in urban and rural areas are treated. However, the School Supply Unit has made its own rules of practice. In some cases the School Supply Unit adapts practices to circumstances. At other times, the School Supply Unit differentiate in order to respond to different levels of resources.

With the first type of differentiation the unit adapts to situations by selection of delivery depots other than schools e.g. a chief's home, a store or a clinic. The manager explained that in relation to differences between urban and rural schools, though they would like to treat all schools the same way,

the problem is that we still have schools which are in the mountains and it not possible to treat the schools in a similar way (School Supply Unit manager's interview December, 1997).

In some schools in these areas they still have to take books to the chief's place, to the store, or the clinic. This means these schools are treated differently because books cannot be delivered directly to schools because of practical constraints.

Secondly, the fieldworker indicated that they deliver books to mountainous areas first to avoid heavy rains which flood rivers during the early months of the year. She also indicated that schools in rural areas are given a month to make queries after book deliveries as opposed to urban schools which are given two weeks to respond to deliveries.

When the manager was asked if the School Supply Unit treated urban and rural schools alike, he replied that the unit divides schools into districts which are used for operational purposes. He went on to say the question was difficult for him because the School Supply Unit does not categorise schools as urban or rural rather, 'we divide schools into districts each and every district has urban and rural areas'(School Supply Unit manager's interview December, 1998). The manager indicated that for the unit whether schools are in urban or rural places is not an issue because the unit because

somebody who is in the mountains but is lucky because he is accessible by road enjoys the same benefits as somebody in the lowlands. There is no difference as far as we are concerned. However, there are schools in the mountains which delay to get books because they must rely on people who receive books on their behalf e.g. the clinic assistants, storekeepers etc. Still even if the messages get to the schools there may be reasons which might

delay them to get books immediately e.g. flooded rivers, lack of transport etc.

To support the fact that there is differentiation between schools in different places the manager of the unit indicated that schools in urban areas are allowed to fetch their own books from the warehouse. However, these schools do not get refunded for transport costs. Schools in the rural areas get books delivered to them free of charge.

However, SSU like the Ministry of Education does not differentiate between poor and rich students when it comes to payment of books. The field officer indicated that all children are expected to pay. She said that at the workshops they encourage poor parents to do piece jobs in order to be in a position to pay for their children. According to her they do this for the good of the pupils because, if children are treated as poor their self-esteem gets affected in a negative way and this can affect their performance at school. Practice at SSU shows that differentiation depends on circumstances. As the discussion has already indicated, SSU adapts to circumstances and differentiates to respond to levels of resources.

4.5.3 SCHOOL LEVEL : POLICY IN PRACTICE

This section is going to be approached in a different manner from the sections on the Ministry of Education and School Supply Unit. Considering the fact that the question seeks to establish ways in which textbooks policy and practice differ between urban and rural schools, the section will describe and compare what happens at each school.

4.5.4.1 WAYS OF ENSURING PAYMENT OF BOOK RENTAL FEES IN SCHOOLS.

At School A payment of rental money is done at the beginning of the year. The headmaster of the school said that they always make sure that pupils pay at least two thirds of the total fee before they are considered registered students. The trick is that the initial amount that students pay includes a book rental fee. In other words no student is officially registered until s/he has paid the book fee.

Although it is not very clear from the data, it would seem that in School B the school management is not very strict about payment of books before registration. This can be inferred from the headmaster's response when he said, "we sometimes send children home to scare the parents." If students in School B paid for the books at the beginning of the year, as is case in School A, there would be no need to send them home.

4.5.4.2 AVAILABILITY OF TEXTBOOKS

From the figures of the inventory records, it is clear that the School Supply Unit's policy of one to one student textbook ratio was realised in 1997. In many classes and subjects the textbook student ratio was nearly one to one and sometimes above. For example, in School A, there was an oversupply of science books in standard one and four. However, there were instances where books were short because children had either lost them or they were torn. In standard three the total number of students was thirty-six and there were thirty-five English textbooks including a teacher's copy. The reason the teacher gave for the missing book was that the book was lost.

Again, there was a shortage of the Sesotho story books in School A. The Sesotho textbooks namely 'Leseli' in class three and 'Lireneketso' in class six were fewer than student enrolments in each class. For 'Leseli' teachers had sent orders to the School Supply Unit but they had not received the books because they were out of print. 'Lireneketso' was short because some textbooks were lost and were never replaced. In this case students shared the books from the old stock some of which are in a very bad state. Some books had confused or missing pages. In relation to Atlases the ratio was two to one.

The inventory taken from School B shows that the ratio of one to one was achieved here too. As in School A there were irregularities in relation to the number of books between classes and subjects. For instance, in standard five there were thirty-seven pupils in class six and forty-three English textbooks.

In this school there were two sets of books for some subjects for classes five, six and seven. Some sets were old and others were new. When the teacher of class five was asked why there were two sets of books she replied that the other set of books is an old one and she keeps it in case students lose or tear books, so that they do not have to pay. In this school as in school A there was a short supply of Sesotho textbooks. For instance, the total enrolment of students in class three (C) was fifty two and there were only fifteen copies of 'Leseli'. This occurred for the same reason as in school A, i.e. that the book was out of print.

As in School B there was an oversupply of some textbooks. In class four (A) there was an oversupply of ten science textbooks and in class four there was an oversupply of six science textbooks.

4.5.4.3 STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH STUDENTS WHO DO NOT/CANNOT PAY BOOK USAGE FEES

Strategies for dealing with students who do not or cannot pay at School A are relatively gentle. Though children pay book fee before they register, it would seem that there are a few students who are admitted without having paid for books. According to the headteacher of the school,

it is sometimes difficult. We have to make special arrangements for students who cannot pay full amounts or cannot pay at all (Headteacher interview December, 1997).

On the other hand, the school committee member said, "I would like to see serious disciplinary measures taken against people who do not want to pay rent for books" (School committee member interview December, 1997).

Up until 1997 School B has dealt more severely with students who have not have not paid fees. Students have been sent home. However, the headmaster for School B indicated that in 1998 no pupil is going to be sent home on the basis of not paying for books. According to the headteacher of School B some of the students who could not afford to pay dropped out of school. As a result, the school has adopted a system of lending old books to poor pupils. The headmaster indicated that the school is not planning to let parents know about the new plan because it may encourage some parents not to pay for books.

5. CONCLUSIONS

POLICY

The intention spelt out in policy documents during the first policy phase was to deliver books equitably to all primary school pupils. Compared to the previous system where parents bought book for their children, there appeared to be greater efficiency and equity. For instance, with the new system in place every child received books regardless of her/his socio-economic background. Pupils who went to school in rural areas could have access to books. Again, students in rural areas who previously went without books now had books.

The initial textbook distribution policy suggested that there would be a necessity to differentiate between rich and poor in order to achieve equity between rich and poor students. The pilot project on the provision of textbooks was initiated in the most impoverished district in the country. The experiences from this project were to be used to determine processes which ensure equity

the procedure for issue of textbooks to poor students would be determined in consultation with managers following experiences in this regard with the Thaba-Tseka Pilot project and in conjunction with actual cases identified in each school from year to year (Education External Circular No 37 of 1982 : 6).

However, policy differentiation was not translated into specific directives. The outcomes of the pilot project were not referred to in later policy developments.

During the second phase, the emphasis on policy content shifted to efficiency with little explicit attention to equity. This was achieved by tightening up efficiency and equity was compromised in this process. Throughout both phases equity referred to socially different groups. Rural urban distinctions i.e. socio-spatially defined differences were not acknowledged.

Although the intention of delivering books to all learners in the same way did achieve greater equity than before, there is a difficulty in that learners have to pay for books. In order to address this problem, it may be argued that differentiation between learners is required. However, this is not addressed. In effect the tightening up of efficiency potentially undermines equity. For example, the tightening of procedures for collection of book usage fees disregarded the position of poor children. As a result, some children dropped out of school.

PRACTICE

While policy content did not differentiate between rich and poor or urban and rural learners, officials involved in the delivery process acknowledged that differentiation was necessary in practice. Thus, differentiation took two forms

(i) adaptation to circumstances such as selection of delivery depots other than schools. For example, books were delivered to chief's homes, stores and clinics and the unit did early deliveries to rural areas. Secondly, teachers who work in rural schools were given a month to make queries related to delivered stock, while those in urban schools were given two weeks. However, the purpose of these adaptations can be related to efficiency rather than equity.

(ii) differentiation as a response to different levels of resources. For example, the decision to deliver books free of charge to rural areas while this was not done for urban areas. This was done arguably, in the interest of equity.

At the level of schools, headteachers allowed pupils who could not pay book rental fees to use books from old stock. This was a form of differentiation at the level of practice between social groups. This practice was introduced earlier, and more liberally in the rural based school than in the urban based school. It is not clear whether this difference was indicative of a different

approach in rural and urban areas, or was just an expression of a different individual or institutional approach.

However, in the case of these schools, there appears to have been significant differences in the responses of school communities to the requirements and demands made on them in relation to provision of textbooks. In the rural area parents did piece jobs in order to be able to pay while in the urban area some children dropped out of school because parents could not afford to pay.

It is even more difficult for the poor to pay the fees required. The rural school community made greater efforts to ensure that books were acquired which was not the case in urban context. For example, parents did piece work in order to pay for books. As a consequence of collaboration between SSU officials, teachers and parents both schools acquired similar numbers of books.

All in all, it can be said that equity is largely achieved through efficiency. In spite of the neglect to address the economic needs of learners who could not pay and tightening of efficiency there were similar numbers of books in both schools. This is partly explained with reference to collaboration of officials and school staff with the rural school community and to the greater efforts of the rural school.

POLICY FORM, EQUITY AND EFFICIENCY

In this study , policy took the various forms which became increasingly specific and as it was elaborated and detailed over time. With this move towards specificity came a shift towards efficiency. Equity became less and less visible in the policy discourse. This would suggest that an analysis of the 'real' purposes of policy should involve an examination of policy in all its phases and forms of expression.

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